



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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WIGEONS ON WATER BY ALABAMA ARTIST WILLIAM MORRIS
TO GRACE 50TH ANNIVERSARY "DUCK STAMP"

Fifty years of Federal waterfowl conservation will be celebrated next year as a pair of American wigeons on the water by Alabama artist William C. Morris graces the 1984-85 Federal Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, popularly known as the "Duck Stamp."

Morris, 38, of Mobile, Alabama, captured the prestigious honor in national competition at the Interior Department in Washington, D.C., where his watercolor design won over 1,581 other entries in judging on November 8 and 9. It was the first time that Morris had ever entered the Federal contest.

His design will be reproduced on next year's 50th "golden anniversary" Migratory Bird Hunting and Conservation Stamp, which must be purchased by all waterfowl hunters 16 years of age and older in the United States. Nearly two million of the colorful stamps are sold each year to hunters, stamp collectors, and a growing number of non-hunters who want to contribute to the Nation's wildlife conservation effort.

The design for each year's "Duck Stamp" is selected through an art contest -- the Federal Government's only regularly sponsored art competition. Revenue from the sale of the "Duck Stamp" is used to buy vital wetland habitat under a program administered by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service since 1934.

Morris' achievement follows his win in the 1984 Alabama State waterfowl stamp competition held earlier this year.

"I've won? I don't know what to say! What a delightful Christmas this will be! This is unbelievable!" Morris said yesterday when he was telephoned by G. Ray Arnett, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Fish and Wildlife and Parks, and informed of his first-place finish.

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A Mobile native, Morris has had no formal art training except for a few weeks of in-studio instruction. "They wanted to make me something different than what I am and tell me what to paint. I wanted to paint wildlife, so I left," he said. He began painting various sports scenes.

"After a watercolor portrait of University of Alabama coach Paul "Bear" Bryant proved popular, everyone said I ought to take my art seriously. I became curious whether people would buy scenes other than the sports art I had been painting, and so I started into wildlife.

Morris is a graduate of the Mobile public schools. He attended Faulkner State College in Bay Minette, Alabama, for 3 years, where he studied drafting and design. He now works as a sales engineer for Brownell Electro, a manufacturer of electronic instruments for industry, in Mobile. He is married and the father of two sons.

His design depicts male and female American wigeons on a still pool of deep blue water. The wigeon is a moderately large species of duck, measuring up to 21 inches and weighing about one-and-three-quarter pounds. It has a white underside with a distinctive white crown in the drake that gives the species its common name -- the baldpate. Wigeons are nervous birds, quick to take flight in fast, irregular flight patterns and bunched flocks that have been compared to those of pigeons.

"I knew I had to produce a design that would make a good engraving," says Morris. "The good black-and-white contrast on the head of the wigeon, and the iridescence of the colors, I felt would stand out in an engraving." Morris spent nearly 100 hours over a 4-week period producing his design.

Robert Bealle, of Waldorf, Maryland, took second place in this year's "Duck Stamp" judging with an oil-on-masonite rendition of redhead ducks, and Neal R. Anderson, of Lincoln, Nebraska, won third place with a gouache painting of a single redhead.

Judges for this year's contest were Frank G. Harris, III, an independent geologist and national director of the Waterfowl Habitat Owners Alliance, of Shreveport, Louisiana; George M. Barley, Jr., a real estate consultant and member of the Florida Environmental Regulation Commission, of Orlando, Florida; Douglas E. Miller, president of Wildlife World, Inc., an art publishing company, and owner of the largest collection of wildlife art in the United States, of Monument, Colorado; Patrick D. Nolan, president of a real estate consulting company and a cattle rancher, of Scottsdale, Arizona; and C. D. Besadny, secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources and president of the International Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies, of Madison, Wisconsin.

"Duck Stamp" designs are chosen through national competition open to all artists who are residents or citizens of the United States. Contestants are limited to one entry apiece each year and the competition is intense because of the growing popularity of the contest.

This year's total of 1,582 entries was the second highest total in the history of the "Duck Stamp" contest.

This year contestants entered from all 50 States and the Virgin Islands, with California, Minnesota, and Pennsylvania producing the most entrants. There were seven other contestants from Alabama besides Morris. Wood ducks, Canada geese, American wigeons, and redheads were the most popular design subjects.

Judges place importance on anatomical accuracy of the birds and suitability of the design for reproduction as a stamp, and consider visual impact, composition and design, style, lasting first impression, and distinctiveness in their selection. In addition, the Bureau of Engraving and Printing advises judges on the technical requirements for good reproduction as stamp designs.

The Federal Government offers no prize or award to the winner other than a sheet of the following year's "Duck Stamps" autographed by the Secretary of the Interior. Commercial wildlife art dealers in the past, however, have been eager to market limited edition reprints of the winning design under private agreements with the finalist. Through this contest, the reputations of previously unknown wildlife artists have been established, and those of professionals have been enhanced.

These colorful stamps are the largest running, annually issued series in U.S. revenue stamp history. Since 1934, when "Duck Stamps" first went on sale, over 3.5 million acres of prime waterfowl territory have been acquired as National Refuge System lands or waterfowl production areas with more than \$270 million in revenue from the "Duck Stamp," supplemented by Wetlands Loan Act funds. About \$15 million in "Duck Stamp" revenue is generated to support this program each year.

Non-hunters and a growing number of stamp collectors are also discovering the "Duck Stamp." The Interior Department encourages outdoor enthusiasts who enjoy wildlife through photography, birdwatching, and other activities to join hunters in supporting the Nation's conservation effort by buying an annual "Duck Stamp." Post offices and U. S. Postal Service philatelic sales units sell "Duck Stamps," as well as an increasing number of National Wildlife Refuges across the country. This year's \$7.50 issue is currently on sale and next year's issue will go on sale July 2, 1984.

-- FWS-49 --

Notes to Editors: Single black-and-white glossies of this year's design are available from 202/343-8770.

This year's judging represents the first in a series of public commemorative activities for the 50th anniversary of the "Duck Stamp" program. The U.S. Postal Service has recently announced plans to issue a unique commemorative postage stamp honoring its sister "Duck Stamp" in mid-1984.

Additional activities through 1984 are being planned. Advance information is available from the Fish and Wildlife Service's Office of Public Affairs at 202/343-5634.

